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ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 1974–1986

A REPORT

BY THE

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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** Task Force on the Rural Elderly: Mike Synar, Oklahoma, Chairman; Mark Siljander, Michigan, Ranking Minority Member.

FORWARD

As the Select Committee on Aging entered its 12th year serving Congress and the public, its role in exploring issues of interest to older Americans continued to expand.

The magnitude of the challenges facing the House Select Committee on Aging should not be underestimated. Since the middle of this century increasing life expectancy and trends toward early retirement have combined to lengthen the expected time spent in retirement for most older Americans. Extended retirement stretches the financial resources of the elderly and gives rise to greater health care needs along with the dependency sometimes associated with very old age. Ignoring these realities, instead of developing new strategies and policies to confront them, would create obstacles rather than opportunities for our "aging" society.

During our tenure as Members of the House Select Committee on Aging we have learned that older Americans should be seen as a national resource whose experience and skills contribute to our prosperity. We are confident that the efforts of the Aging Committee have increased the opportunities for older persons to continue to contribute to the society they share with all Americans. Together with the Subcommittee and Task Force Chairmen, Chairwoman, and respective Ranking Minority Members, as well as our Staff, we are dedicated to meeting these challenges from the Committee's own unique multidisciplinary perspective.

EDWARD R. ROYBAL,
Chairman

MATTHEW J. RINALDO,
Ranking Minority Member

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I. INTRODUCTION

This document, prepared by the Staff of the Select Committee on Aging for the use of its Members, is designed:

- **to provide the reader with a topical overview of the jurisdiction, activities and accomplishments of the Select Committee on Aging;**
- **to illustrate the role served by the Committee, its Subcommittees and related Task Forces; and**
- **to describe some of the major trends and challenges that will confront policy makers during the 100th Congress and after.**

The House Select Committee on Aging, now in its 12th year of service to Congress and the nation, continues to pursue its mandate to examine issues and recommend solutions to the problems which confront older Americans. The Committee is achieving this objective by exploring alternative approaches from both the public and private sector to efficiently address the needs of its constituency. The Committee also seeks to determine, in a broad perspective, those environmental, social and economic factors that will have a principal impact on younger Americans as they age during the next several decades.

II. HISTORY OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Permanent Select Committee on Aging was established on October 2, 1974 when the amendments to H.Res. 988, the Committee Reform Amendments of 1974, were adopted by the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 323-84.

The amendment establishing the Select Committee on Aging was subsequently incorporated into the Rules of the House of Representatives as Rule X 6(g), which outlines the Select Committee's jurisdiction as follows:

> (g) There shall be in the House the permanent Select Committee on Aging, which shall not have legislative jurisdiction but which shall have jurisdiction:
>
> > (1) to conduct a continuing comprehensive study and review of the problems of the older American, including but not limited to income maintenance, housing, health (including medical research), welfare, employment, education, recreation, and participation in family and community life as self-respecting citizens;
> >
> > (2) to study the use of all practical means and methods of encouraging the development of public and private programs and policies which will assist the older American in taking a full part in national life and which will encourage the utilization of the knowledge, skills, special aptitudes, and abilities of older Americans to contribute to a better quality of life for all Americans;
> >
> > (3) to develop policies that would encourage the coordination of both governmental and private programs designed to deal with problems of aging; and
> >
> > (4) to review any recommendations made by the President or by the White House Conference on Aging relating to programs or policies affecting older Americans.

The Honorable William J. Randall of Missouri was appointed the first chairman of the new Select Committee on Aging by Speaker Carl Albert on February 6, 1975. On March 6, 1975 the Select Committee held an organizational meeting, adopted Rules of Procedure, and organized subcommittees. Although the size of the Committee was not specified in the establishing resolution, twenty-eight Members were appointed in 1975, and thirty-four in 1977.

The original Members of the Select Committee appointed on February 6, 1975 include: Mr. Randall of Missouri, Chairman; Mr. Pepper of Florida; Mr. Roybal of California; Mr. Rooney of Pennsylvania; Mr. Biaggi of New York; Mr. Flowers of Alabama; Mr. Andrews of North Carolina; Mr. Burton of California; Mr. Beard of Rhode Island; Mr. Blouin of Iowa; Mr. Bonker of Washington; Mr. Downey of New York; Mr. Florio of New Jersey; Mr. Ford of Tennessee; Mr. Hughes of New Jersey; Mrs. Lloyd of Tennessee; Mr. Santini of Neveda; Mr. Wilson of California; Mr. Wampler of Virginia; Mr. Hammerschmidt of Arkansas; Mr. Heinz of Pennsylvania; Mr. Cohen of Maine; Mr. Sarasin of Connecticut; Mr. Walsh of New York; and Mr. Grassley of Iowa. On February 10, 1975 Mr. Matsunaga of Hawaii was appointed and on February 27, 1975 Mr. Risenhoover of Oklahoma and Mr. Gude of Maryland were also appointed.

The Honorable Claude Pepper succeeded as chairman on January 17, 1977 having been appointed by Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. The current Chairman of the Select Committee on Aging is The Honorable Edward R. Roybal, who succeeded Congressman Pepper as chairman in January 1983, also having been appointed by Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr.

III. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CURRENT COMMITTEE, SUBCOMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

A complete listing of the membership of the Full Committee and Task Forces appears on the inside cover of this document.

Chairman Edward R. Roybal is joined on the Select Committee on Aging by The Honorable Matthew J. Rinaldo, who is the Ranking Minority Member. Fernando Torres-Gil and Paul Schlegel are the respective Majority and Minority Staff Directors. Originally authorized during the 97th Congress, two task forces are also associated with the Committee: The Task Force on Social Security and Women, and The Task Force on the Rural Elderly. In keeping with House rules that committees with membership of twenty or more have at least four subcommittees, the following Subcommittees of the Select Committee on Aging have been established:

Subcommittee on Retirement Income and Employment

Edward R. Roybal, Chairman
Thomas J. Tauke, Ranking Minority Member

Thomas J. Downey
Geo. W. Crockett, Jr.
Rick Boucher
Harry M. Reid
Robert E. Wise, Jr.
Harold L. Volkmer
Thomas J. Manton
Richard H. Stallings
Mary Rose Oakar

Norman D. Shumway
James M. Jeffords
Mark D. Siljander
Jim Saxton
Helen Delich Bentley
Harris W. Fawell
Bill Schuette

Professional Staff:
Geo. Allen Johnston, Majority
Jane Williams, Minority

The Subcommittee on Retirement Income and Employment is charged with oversight responsibility for all governmental and nongovernmental programs which affect the financial well-being of older Americans.

Subcommittee on Health and Long-Term Care

Claude Pepper, Chairman
Ralph Regula, Ranking Minority Member

James J. Florio
Harold E. Ford
Mary Rose Oakar
Thomas A. Luken
Dan Mica
Henry A. Waxman
Mike Synar
Butler Derrick
Bruce F. Vento
Barney Frank
Ron Wyden
Ike Skelton
Dennis M. Hertel
Robert A. Borski
Ben Erdreich
Buddy MacKay
Norman Sisisky

George C. Wortley
Jim Courter
Claudine Schneider
Thomas J. Ridge
John McCain
Sherwood L. Boehlert
Jim Lightfoot
Jan Meyers
Patrick L. Swindall
Paul B. Henry
Jim Kolbe

Professional Staff:
Kathleen G. Cravedi, Majority
Mark Benedict, J.D., Minority

The Subcommittee on Health and Long-Term Care is responsible for research, oversight and investigative activities regarding health care programs, facilities and general issues.

Subcommittee on Housing and Consumer Interests

Don Bonker, Chairman
John Paul Hammerschmidt, Ranking Minority Member

Marilyn Lloyd
Stan Lundine
Beverly B. Byron
Tom Lantos
William Hill Boner
Bart Gordon
Barney Frank
Ron Wyden
Bill Richardson

George C. Wortley
Thomas J. Ridge
George W. Gekas
Christopher H. Smith
Ben Blaz
Bill Schuette

Professional Staff:
Michael F. Rodgers, Majority
Patricia Lawrence, Minority

The Subcommittee on Housing and Consumer Interests is responsible for oversight and investigative activities regarding a wide variety of government and private sector programs concerning housing, utilities and general consumer issues.

Subcommittee on Human Services

Mario Biaggi, Chairman
Olympia J. Snowe, Ranking Minority Member

James J. Florio
William J. Hughes
Bill Richardson
Tommy F. Robinson
Thomas J. Downey
Mike Synar
Tom Lantos
Ben Erdreich
Stan Lundine

Matthew J. Rinaldo
John McCain
Jim Saxton
Jim Lightfoot
Ben Blaz
Floyd Spence

Professional Staff:
Robert B. Blancato, Majority
Barbara Bayer Kaplan, Minority

The Subcommittee on Human Services has as its primary responsibility the oversight of key Federal programs providing social and human services to the elderly, most notably the Older Americans Act and the Social Services Block Grant.

IV. COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Select Committee on Aging is an informational and investigative committee:

- **It provides important services to Congress and the public.**
- **The Committee engages in issue development which has resulted in recommendations to appropriate standing committees of the House of Representatives and the eventual passage of crucial legislation.**
- **Because of its unique character, the Committee has the ability to conduct oversight, strategic planning and cooperative efforts on the widest variety of aging issues.**

The Committee's mandate, as described in the Rules of the House of Representatives, provides the organizational structure for this section, illustrating additional activities and accomplishments of the Aging Committee and its Subcommittees. Following a discussion of the services provided by the Committee and the contributions of its Members to major legislative initiatives, this section concludes with a consideration of the Committee's response to its mandate: (1) to study particular problems relating to aging, (2) to examine efforts to encourage positive programs to benefit older Americans, (3) to develop coordinated policies, and (4) to review the recommendations of the Executive Branch.

A. Services Provided to Congress and the Public:

The Committee enjoys the largest membership of any permanent committee of the House of Representatives, presently composed of 65 Members, many of whom have large constituencies of older persons. The House Select Committee on Aging and its associate Subcommittees provide:

- **extensive technical support to Members of Congress, and**
- **wide dissemination of information regarding numerous aging-related topics in recognition of the importance of educating the public regarding the special needs and interests of the elderly.**

The Committee is a valuable national resource of information and research on aging and the aged. The Committee Staff responds to numerous telephone calls and letters from Member offices, the general public, universities, law firms, federal agencies and other entities seeking assistance or information.

Technical Services. Members and Committee Staff frequently participate in conferences, symposiums and other general meetings which have as their topic issues of concern to older Americans. Staff frequently provide assistance to Member offices in the preparation of speeches, reports, information papers, and legislation concerning aging and the elderly. The Committee and Subcommittee Staff, in certain instances, provide support to Member offices in the preparation of field and national hearings of the Committee, as well as relevant informational services on the topics for such hearings.

Publications. Aging Committee publications provide a valuable resource on aging issues. To date the Committee and its Subcommittee have produced nearly 600 Committee information prints, hearing reports and studies, as well as numerous shorter analyses and information summaries.

Some Committee publications are expressly designed for the use of the general public. For example, the annual Federal Income Tax Guide For Older Americans, published as a Committee print, is also made available to Members of Congress in a condensed newsletter version for reproduction and distribution as a service to their constituents. In addition to its annual publications, information prints which provide needed assistance to older persons on topics such as funeral planning and retirement planning are updated and reprinted periodically.

Full Committee and Subcommittee Staff also prepare reports and analyses concerning emerging issues of interest to Congress and the public. For example, the Committee was among the first to issue a series of reports which described the projected impact of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (Gramm-Rudman-Hollings) on Federal programs serving older persons, and it has also distributed information regarding the impact of tax revision proposals on older Americans.

B. Contribution to Major Legislative and Administrative Initiatives:

Among the numerous legislative and administrative accomplishments of the Select Committee on Aging and its Members are positive contributions to the development of public laws and administrative regulations relating to:

- **health and nutrition,**
- **age discrimination, mandatory retirement, and employment of older workers,**
- **housing,**
- **retirement income security, and**
- **human and social services.**

During its twelve year history the Select Committee on Aging has participated in most of the significant legislative and administrative events affecting older Americans. Examples of these accomplishments include:

Age Discrimination Act of 1975 -- Committee Members helped to clarify the meaning of the bill's prohibitions and provide a private cause of action and allowance of attorney fees to prevailing plaintiffs. The Committee also participated in conferences with Health, Education, and Welfare General Counsel on the formulation of Age Discrimination Act regulations.

ADEA Amendments -- Designed to strengthen the Age Discrimination In Employment Act and ban most forced retirement practices, this legislation was cosponsored by Members of the Committee on Aging.

Older Americans Act Amendments -- Committee Members secured the enactment of the 1978 amendments to: enhance funding for such activities as home delivered meals; provide direct funding to Indian tribes for social and nutritional services; authorize funds for model projects to improve the rural service delivery system; and authorize Federal grants to assist with acquisition of buildings to house senior centers by lease as well as by purchase.

Social Security Amendments of 1983 -- The Committee, its Members and staff played key roles in the analysis and development of various proposals offered to treat the then projected insolvency of the Social Security system; during the debate the Committee provided a number of analyses and reports, and conducted several hearings concerning the issues involved in Congress' deliberation over these amendments.

Social Security Disability Benefits Reform Act -- By holding numerous hearings and working closely with both the States and courts, the Aging Committee's leadership was responsible for the eventual passage of legislation. Committee reports were cited before the United States Supreme Court in City of New York v. Heckler, which successfully challenged the legality of the review process. The Act included: (1) a medical improvements standard that must be met before benefits can be terminated, (2) a requirement that the Social Security Administration (SSA) take multiple impairments into account in its disability determinations, (3) a moratorium on mental health reviews until new standards were adopted, (4) the continuation of benefits through the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) hearing process, and (5) additional procedural safeguards.

Waiver of Failure to Pay Estimated Tax -- One of the consequences of the taxation of social security benefits was the failure of some older Americans to realize that they were required to pay estimated taxes as a result. The Committee on Aging developed educational materials for taxpayers about the change and obtained a commitment from the IRS to waive penalties for failure to pay estimated tax that resulted from public confusion over legislation which taxed social security benefits for the first time.

Annual Review of the Budget Process -- Each year the Committee prepares analyses of the impact on older Americans of the President's budget proposal, the budget reconciliation process, and various appropriations bills affecting Older Americans Act, low income energy assistance and subsidized housing programs among others. In particular, the Committee has been instrumental in limiting proposed changes to Medicare that would have had a detrimental impact on the out-of-pocket health care costs of older Americans.

C. Comprehensive Studies of the Problems Confronting Older Americans

An important Congressional function best carried out by a Select Committee is the comprehensive study of selected issues. Examples of subjects areas where the Select Committee on Aging has provided leadership regarding the analysis and formulation of important policy recommendations include:

- **the investigation of crimes against and victimization of the elderly,**
- **the study of the health care needs of older Americans -- including long-term care and health care quality assurance,**
- **the identification of the special problems and needs of minority elderly populations, and**
- **the examination of the sources of income of older persons, the causes of the economic status of the poor elderly, and the effect of emergent demographic trends on future retirement income adequacy.**

The unique combination of resources and expertise possessed by the Select Committee on Aging is ideally suited to the in-depth study of issues related to aging and older Americans. During the past decade the Select Committee on Aging has examined numerous issues, including:

Age Discrimination and Employment Opportunity. The House Select Committee on Aging, together with its Subcommittees, has assumed a leadership role in working to eliminate age discrimination and maximize employment opportunities for older Americans. Hearings and reports have examined the obstacles faced by older Americans in obtaining housing, services and employment as a result of their age. The Task Force on Social Security and Women has brought particular attention to the often unique difficulties confronting older women.

Crime and Victimization. The Committee and its Subcommittees have been the focal point of public concern for the safety of the nation's older citizens. During the past decade hearings and reports investigated crimes of fraud and misrepresentation as well as violent crimes against the elderly. Occasionally the Committee and its Subcommittees revisit particular subjects of continuing concern. By reexamining questions involving "elder abuse," nursing home abuse, medical quackery and fraudulent medical degrees -- all issues which have led to action by the Congress or by the Administration -- the Committee has highlighted the need for constant vigilance to protect the vulnerable elderly.

Health. From their inception, the Committee and its Subcommittees have highlighted the health issues that disproportionately affect older Americans. Health awareness has significantly increased as a result of hearings and reports on diverse subjects, including high blood pressure, cancer, mental illness, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, osteoporosis, and the process of aging itself. It has also published a series of reports on the out-of-pocket health care costs of the elderly. Special attention has been concentrated on the cost and the ability of older persons to obtain and effectively utilize health care services furnished under the Medicare and Medicaid programs -- an ongoing concern of the Task Force on the Rural Elderly.

Housing and Consumer Interests. Like younger persons, older Americans are consumers of numerous goods and services such as housing (as owners or renters), utilities, telephones and banking. The Committee and its associated Subcommittees, through a variety of hearings, reports and investigations, have explored the ability of those elderly restricted to limited fixed incomes to obtain adequate housing, maintained oversight of the HUD section 202 housing program, encouraged the continued support of the Congregate Housing Services Program, examined "home equity conversion" as a potential alternative income source, and carefully monitored the effect of inflation and rising utility costs on the elderly.

Human and Social Services. Whether due to poor health or simply advanced age, many older Americans are in need of a variety of services, from transportation to meal delivery to recreational activities. Committee and Subcommittee hearings and reports have explored the full range of services needed by and provided to the aged community, and maintained oversight of the following programs, among others: Older Americans Act, Older American Volunteer Programs, VISTA, Community Service and Social Service Block Grants, Rehabilitation Act services, food stamp and senior feeding programs, as well as legal services.

Income Security. The Committee and its Subcommittees have devoted extensive resources to income security issues. Subjects examined in hearings and reports include the economic resources of older Americans and the causes of poverty among the elderly. The Committee has also examined the effect of discontinuous work force participation on Social Security and private pension retirement income receipt, which frequently results in inadequate living standards for a large number of older persons, including a disproportionate number of women.

Special Populations. Older Americans who belong to special population groups often present unique challenges to policy makers in terms of the design and delivery of services and assistance. In recent years hearings before the Committee and its Subcommittees have increased awareness of issues relating to the health, income security and services needs of the minority elderly, as well as older women. In many respects minority women are among the most vulnerable of all older Americans, and considerable resources have been directed toward the development of a better understanding of their needs.

D. Study of the Means to Encourage Public and Private Programs and Policies to Assist Older Americans

Certain themes central to the activities of the Select Committee on Aging and its four associated Subcommittees during the past 12 years should be highlighted:

- **the vindication of "elder rights,"**
- **the encouragement of continued work force participation of older Americans,**
- **the education of Congress and the public about the process of aging and its consequences, and**
- **the recognition of older Americans as vibrant contributors to the artistic and social life of our nation.**

The full range of Aging Committee activities can not be encompassed in a single summary. However, several principal themes characterizing the accomplishments of the Select Committee on Aging include:

Elder's Rights. An examination of the scope of the Committee's interests reveals that one focus of attention has been the vindication of "elders' rights." For example, hearings have ranged from efforts to secure more uniform State laws protecting the rights of grandparents to visit grandchildren after divorce of the parents, to a recently published report considering the rights of the terminally ill elderly to both have and refuse medical treatment.

Continued Work Force Participation. Another theme common to Committee activities is the relationship of older workers and retirees to their employers. In an effort to encourage work force participation among older persons, hearings and studies have addressed issues concerning time sharing and part-time employment, displaced older workers, mandatory retirement generally and as applied to specific groups (e.g., airline pilots, public safety officers and college professors), the continued accrual of pension benefits beyond "normal retirement age," the obstacles facing older women reentering the work force, and other work-related issues.

Understanding the Aging Process. The public is generally aware that older Americans are confronted with a variety of unique health care needs. Nevertheless, the Committee and Subcommittees have long recognized a continuing need to educate the public about specific health issues and conditions of which there is insufficient public understanding. Hearings designed to increase awareness of conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, senility, alcohol and prescription drug misuse, suicide, and breast cancer have succeeded not only in raising public consciousness of these conditions, but frequently have resulted in increased funding for additional research.

E. Development of Coordinated Policies Dealing with the Problems of Aging

To fulfill its oversight and investigative functions, the Committee on Aging maintains contact with Federal agencies, Committees of Congress, and State and local administrators that have jurisdiction over programs affecting older people. In this way the Aging Committee can:

- **assess current Federal, State and municipal law and administrative policy, and**
- **prepare recommendations and initiatives on issues affecting older persons.**

The oversight and investigative functions of the Select Committee on Aging include both specific programs and general policy analyses.

Program Oversight. Committee and Subcommittee hearings and reports have evaluated the implementation of the Diagnosis Related Groups (DRGs) and the impact of other programmatic changes in Medicare and Medicaid on the out-of-pocket health care costs of older Americans. Similar oversight activities have been directed at Social Security and related income maintenance programs, including: Social Security financing, office closings, and benefits equity issues like "earnings sharing" and "the notch"; the disability review process; and food stamp reform. Attention has also been directed toward Older

Americans Act reauthorization to secure the continued availability of programs for the elderly that will assist them in maintaining self-sufficiency.

Research and Policy Analysis. Among its most important activities are the dissemination of data and information which have relevance to the oversight responsibilities of the Committee. Congress and the public have been provided with studies of: the results of a national survey of 1200 congregate and home-delivered meal providers; the out-of-pocket costs for health care and their impact on elderly income; a multi-volume report on the status of the rural elderly and an evaluation of their need for services; the financial risks faced by elderly persons who need long-term care services; and the projected impact of outlay reductions due to the "Gramm-Rudman-Hollings" deficit reduction mechanism.

F. Review of the Recommendations of the President and the White House Conference on Aging

In response to its mandate, the Committee and its Subcommittees review Executive initiatives on both an individual and annual basis.

The President's Budget. During the annual budget process, the Committee typically releases an examination of the President's budget. This year the Committee distributed a Committee analysis of the impact of "Gramm-Rudman-Hollings" on programs for the elderly, children and poor; responded to proposed cuts in Medicare and Medicaid benefits; and recommended initiatives to protect long-term care programs and services from further budget reductions and restrictive administrative regulations.

Executive Recommendations on Reauthorization of Programs Serving Older Americans. The Committee plays an active role in the formulation of policy regarding the statutory reauthorization of programs affecting the elderly. These responsibilities include review of executive branch recommendations concerning reauthorization issues. The Select Committee on Aging continues to provide valuable research, oversight and policy analysis relating to housing and community development, employment training,

and energy assistance programs. During the 100th Congress Members of the Aging Committee will review in detail proposals involving the reauthorization of Older Americans Act programs.

White House Conference on Aging. Historically these conferences have been held every ten years. The conduct and outcome of the 1981 Conference proved to be extremely controversial, and resulted in a Committee report titled "The Politicization of the 1981 White House Conference on Aging" which evaluated allegations regarding the manner in which the Conference was conducted. The Committee anticipates active oversight of the processes involved in the planning of the 1991 Conference on Aging.

V. CONCLUSION

The House Select Committee on Aging continues to serve an instrumental role in the Congress' examination of those issues which confront older Americans:

- **Throughout its history the Committee has taken a leading role in raising those critical issues of the day which have a fundamental and pervasive impact on the health, welfare, employment and financial security of our nation's aging population.**

- **The demographic changes facing our nation and its aging population require congressional vigilance to protect the needs of today's and tomorrow's older Americans.**

Demographic trends suggest that as life expectancy continues to expand for future generations the old and very old will play a prominent role in our society's policy decisions. In the shorter term, the aging of the much heralded "baby boom" generation poses questions of its own regarding multigenerational bonds and the allocation of resources for elderly, children and intermediate groups. In response, the Committee continues to expand its approach toward policies needed to meet the challenge of our aging population.

The Committee has acted as a catalyst in the development of legislative enactments and the promotion of federal administrative agency initiatives. The Chairman and Members of the Committee have sponsored legislation and appeared before Committees of the House and Senate to urge review of important legislation relating to aging issues. As the nation looks toward the 100th Congress, the House Select Committee on Aging anticipates a growing need for information, analysis and insight into the issues raised by our aging society.

○